

February 25, 2026

GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

Governance Subcommittee
Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 5:30
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138

Called for the purpose of beginning discussions on potential School Committee rule changes, including but not limited to the two recent School Committee orders C26-017 and C26-022.

Subcommittee Members Present: Mayor Siddiqui (Chair); Chair Weinstein; Member Jaikumar

Other Members Present: Member de Paula Santos; Member Hudson

Also Present: Chad Leith, Chief Accountability Officer; David Murphy, Superintendent of Schools; Damon Smith, Chief Operating Officer

Mayor Siddiqui in chair.

The meeting began at 5:30 p.m. **Mayor Siddiqui** read the call of the meeting noting that the subcommittee would review previously proposed rule changes and discuss additional updates related to public comment procedures and School Committee governance.

Mayor Siddiqui emphasized the importance of transparency and public participation in School Committee meetings. She noted that part of the discussion would focus on improving accessibility and ensuring the committee's rules reflect current practices and legal requirements.

Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor for public comment. Given the time constraints, each speaker was allotted three minutes. The following caregivers and community member, Jess Goetz, shared the following sentiments:

- Expressed frustration with motions being voted on without sufficient discussion.
- Voiced support for allowing public comment on non-agenda items and more effectively incorporating educator voices.
- Raised concerns regarding the School Committee's accessibility and the need for a more inclusive public comment process.
- Discussed the potential for including an educator non-voting seat on the School Committee.
- Referenced examples from other Massachusetts communities, including Arlington and Hull, where educator representation has been implemented successfully.
- Emphasized the importance of ensuring educators have opportunities to contribute their perspectives to School Committee discussions.
- Suggested reconsidering how public comment is structured so it is more accessible and democratic for community members and educators.

Mayor Siddiqui introduced key members present. **Mayor Siddiqui** clarified that while the suggestion of an educator non-voting seat was important, the primary focus of the meeting was reviewing the rule changes discussed in 2025.

Mayor Siddiqui then shared her screen to review the previously proposed updates. Key changes discussed included:

February 25, 2026

GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

- Removing language identifying the Mayor as Chair of the School Committee, reflecting the district's charter change.
- Simplifying language regarding summer meetings to better reflect current practice.
- Removing outdated or redundant sections of the rules.
- Editing certain sections for clarity and consistency.

Member Weinstein noted that the change removing the mayor as chair had already been addressed at a previous meeting.

Member Jaikumar suggested placing certain rule revisions on hold until the Committee receives additional clarification, particularly regarding how certain provisions are interpreted and implemented.

The subcommittee also discussed Sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the rules, which relate to Committee meetings such as retreats, workshops, or training sessions. Members noted that the terminology in these sections may be outdated and unclear.

Mayor Siddiqui requested that the administration seek legal guidance on these sections to clarify:

- Appropriate terminology (e.g., retreat, workshop, or training)
- Whether these meetings should be open or closed sessions
- Whether such meetings should be broadcast to the public
- Whether the rules align with Open Meeting Law requirements

Mr. Smith offered to forward the Committee's questions to legal counsel and circulate recommended language updates to the subcommittee once guidance is received. Members emphasized that any rule revisions should prioritize transparency, clarity, and compliance with legal requirements while ensuring that the committee's procedures reflect how meetings are currently conducted. The subcommittee agreed that some rule updates could move forward as recommendations, while others should remain pending until legal guidance is received.

The subcommittee continued reviewing proposed changes to the School Committee rules related to public meetings, accessibility, and broadcasting expectations.

Superintendent Murphy explained that state statute does not require meetings such as workshops or retreats to be broadcast, and that the School Committee has discretion in determining whether such meetings should be televised. Members discussed logistical limitations and noted that many committees do not have highly prescriptive rules governing the broadcasting of these types of meetings.

Mayor Siddiqui and **Member Jaikumar** reviewed the current proposal, which suggested that retreats could be broadcast while workshops would not be televised, while still remaining open to the public.

Mayor Siddiqui emphasized the importance of transparency and suggested that the rules clearly state that meetings are open to the public even if they are not broadcast, to avoid any perception that information is being withheld.

Superintendent Murphy proposed language clarifying that meetings must be held in a space accessible to the public, rather than requiring that they be televised. Members also discussed accessibility concerns related to public participation, including technical issues that could prevent individuals from participating in public comment. The subcommittee continued reviewing additional proposed edits to the School Committee rules, including removing outdated language and clarifying existing procedures.

February 25, 2026

GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

During the discussion, members raised the following points:

- The importance of ensuring the rules provide clear expectations for both Committee members and the public.
- Clarifying guidelines related to broadcasting workshops and retreats, including logistical considerations.
- Updating rules to reflect current practices for assigning subcommittee membership by the Chair.
- Maintaining the Superintendent's ability to communicate with the School Committee on educational matters.
- Establishing fair and flexible guidelines for public comment timing, particularly to accommodate accessibility needs.
- Recognizing potential challenges of allowing public comment on topics outside the School Committee's jurisdiction.

Members also discussed ways to improve engagement with frontline educators, caregivers, and community members. Superintendent Murphy suggested exploring models used by other districts to incorporate educator input while maintaining administrative responsibility for system-wide outcomes.

Mayor Siddiqui and members discussed potential approaches such as:

- Creating structured opportunities for educator and caregiver input during School Committee meetings.
- Designating agenda space for invited presentations or stakeholder perspectives.
- Reviewing models from other districts to inform potential changes.

Members agreed that additional discussion and research would be needed before finalizing rule revisions.

Mayor Siddiqui outlined next steps, including continuing to refine the proposed rule edits and scheduling another subcommittee meeting to further discuss the educator voice motion and related rule changes.

Mayor Siddiqui adjourned the meeting at 7 p.m.